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ABSTRACT

This guide is part of an initiative to support the efforts of the Organizations Concerned about Rural Education (OCRE) in helping rural school districts plan for school improvement. The guide outlines a one-day workshop to help focus attention on ways to gain community support and plan initiatives. After explaining how to plan the workshop, the guide offers a step-by-step format for the presentation that includes the following: welcoming the participants and explaining the purpose of the workshop; explaining the steps for effective planning; creating a vision; presenting success stories; enlisting community support for change; organizing the community; discussing school-business partnerships; dealing with community conflicts; finding funding; writing grants; taking action; and concluding the presentation. Accompanying the guide is a videotape that examines how two rural communities (Charlotte City, Virginia; E. Yuma County, Colorado) either built additional facilities or better prepared their students with today's necessary job skills by using innovative partnership approaches with local industry and the community. (Contains a building analysis and a list of organizations concerned about rural education.) (GR)

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ED 427 496

Rebuilding America's Schools

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Facilitator's Guide

OCRE – Organizations Concerned About Rural Education

EF 005 161

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Introduction

What's the Purpose of this Guide?

This guide is part of an initiative to support the efforts of the Organizations Concerned about Rural Education (OCRE) in helping rural school districts plan for school improvement. According to the General Accounting Office, one-third of the nation's schools need major repairs or replacement – and half of these schools are located in rural communities. Most rural communities have less than 400 students and operate on some of the lowest revenue basis in the country. To address their urgent needs to upgrade and replace their schools, many have had to rely on innovative grass-roots initiatives. This guide will help districts to focus on the steps to begin planning for their future.

Who Should Use this Guide?

If your school system is looking for solutions to the challenges of improving schools, making capital repairs, building new schools or creating infrastructure for technology, this guide will provide suggestions for enlisting support within your community.

Who should attend this workshop?

All members of the community should be attending. Remember this is not just a school problem, it's a community issue. Community resource organizations, police, Mayor, members of the town council, school boards, farmers, developers, doctors, etc. I think you get the idea. Anyone who will benefit from an improved school system should attend.

How Do You Use this Guide?

The guide outlines a one-day workshop to help focus attention on ways to gain community support and plan initiatives. The workshop is organized in a recommended format, but facilitators may review the material and adjust the presentation to their individual needs.

What Do I Need to Get Started?

Coordination is key to conducting an effective workshop. When planning the workshop, consider the logistics of the space being used:

- The room size and availability
- The room set-up
- Equipment needs
- Date and time of the workshop
- Number of participants

Before beginning the workshop presentation:

- Review this guide.
- Identify and gather support materials, for example relevant articles, current legislation, etc. Be sure to have enough copies of any handouts.
- Gather supplies – a board or flip chart, working markers, pens.
- Check that the video player is working properly and that the videotapes are rewound and "cued."
- Be sure the physical facilities are large enough to accommodate the number of participants. Check that the room temperature is comfortable and that seats are arranged so everyone can clearly view the video.

How Can I Make My Presentation More Effective?

Your experience in conducting presentations may be limited. Prior to the presentation, be sure that you:

- Know your material well. Read the guide thoroughly and prepare any notes.
- Practice beforehand. It may be helpful to videotape yourself.
- Have support materials ready.
- Use relaxation techniques.
- Give yourself a pep talk before beginning.
- Think positively.
- Make eye contact with participants.

There are several techniques that can help make your presentation more effective:

- Relate the information to needs and experiences.
- Use visual aids whenever possible. Write examples on the board, use transparencies, photos and videos.
- Vary the speed at which you speak and the tone of your voice. Speak slowly and deliberately when making an important point.
- Be alert to your participants' reactions. Fidgeting and yawning may mean its time for a break or that you are moving too slowly. A confused look may mean you need to review a point again. Adjust your pace to your audience.
- Take breaks every 30 – 45 minutes. Have coffee and soft drinks available. You may also want to have some small snacks.
- Have nametags available so participants can call each other by name.
- Call participants by their names and maintain eye contact with the group.
- Use involvement techniques. Bring the audience into the action. Ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions require more than "yes-no" answers and initiate discussion.
- Ask participants to respond to each other's comments.
- Ask for questions and comments at the end of each topic.
- Make sure everyone clearly understands the message before moving on to the next topic.

Welcome

Welcome the participants to the workshop. Introduce yourself and ask each participant to explain his or her role.

Explain to the participants that they are not alone in trying to improve their schools and community. Currently more than one-third of the nation's schools need major repair or replacement. The bill for reconstruction exceeds 125 billion and with the additional costs for technology, the figure grows to more than 200 billion. The costs are staggering and raising the funds is especially challenging for rural school districts that often operate on some of the lowest revenue basis in the country. Yet many districts have come up with innovative grassroots operations and have succeeded in improving their schools.

Explain the purpose of the workshop. This workshop is designed to help communities plan effectively for school improvement. The workshop will review:

- Steps to effective planning
- Creating a vision for your community's schools
- Success stories
- Gaining community support for initiatives
- Involving the community
- Forming business partnerships
- Finding resources
- Grant writing
- Campaigning for legislation

The Steps for Effective Planning

Explain the planning process. The process for planning varies from community to community, but successful groups work through similar steps.

Ask the participants to create a list of steps for effective planning. The list might include:

- Begin to work now for a long-term future. Create a vision for change and improvement. You need to know where you

are going to find the way the get there.

- Consult teachers, students, parents, community members businesses, religious leaders – everyone who has a stake
- Establish a committee involving everyone who has a stake – parents, teachers, students, community leaders, business leaders, old and young
- Determine objectives and develop an action plan
- Conduct an inventory of current resources – who will help and who might be unwilling to support these efforts? Who can help achieve these goals and how?
- Develop comprehensive strategies to achieve your goals. Your plan should consider all aspects of the system.
- Create a timetable for change. Include long term and short term goals and set realistic dates. It is also critical to establish indicators for measuring success.
- Create a budget
- Review a draft of the plan. Obtain feedback from all stakeholders.
- Connect with other organizations for additional funds, publicity, direct local support and partnerships of all kinds.
- Launch your campaign publicly. Plan a kick-off event that can get the whole community involved in implementing your plan.
- Implement the plan and evaluate your results. Provide regular reports that show how you are succeeding, what obstacles are still being faced, and plans to overcome them.

Explain to them that the workshop will show them how to work through various steps in the planning process.

Creating a Vision

Introduce the idea of creating a vision by asking the participants to imagine that it is five years from today and that they have created the most desirable school district. Explain that describing this ideal district is their "vision."

Explain that creating a vision is the first step in planning for the future. Visioning involves describing what you want to see in the future, creating a picture of your ideal or preferred future as though you were seeing it right now.

Discuss what to consider when creating a vision. When visioning for change be sure to:

- Draw on the beliefs and mission of your school system

- Describe what you want to see in the future
- Be positive and inspiring in your vision
- Do not assume that the system will have the same framework as it does now
- Be open to dramatic modifications to the way things are now in your organization, facilities, or methodology.

Discuss the benefits of Visioning.

- Helps you think creatively and beyond your current boundaries
- Provides continuity and avoids planning starts and stops
- Identifies a direction and purpose
- Alerts the community to needed change
- Promotes interest and commitment
- Creates a focal point for change
- Encourages openness to unique and creative solutions
- Encourages and builds confidence
- Creates ownership and involvement
- Is efficient and productive

Discuss the key components for creating a vision. Before you can create your vision, you must identify your beliefs and create a mission statement. Doing so will help you clarify your ideals and create a vision that is achievable and fits within your value system.

1. Identifying Your Beliefs

Explain that incorporating your beliefs is an essential part of visioning. Your beliefs:

- Must meet organizational and community goals
- Be a statement of your values
- Are a declaration of your expected outcomes
- Must be precise and practical
- Will guide the actions of all involved
- Reflect the knowledge, philosophy and actions of all
- Are a key component of strategic planning

2. Creating a Mission Statement

Explain that once you have clarified your beliefs, you will build on them to create a mission statement. The mission statement is a statement of your purpose. The mission statement:

- Draws on your beliefs
- Is future oriented and portrays your organization as it will be
- Focuses on one common purpose
- Is specific to your organization, not generic
- Is short, not more than one or two sentences.

Provide an example of a mission statement:

Our mission is to maintain an exemplary public school system with educational environments that provides the opportunities and resources for each student to develop his/her full learning potential.

Ask the participants to create mission statement for their district.

Exercise in Creating a Vision

Explain that participants will have an opportunity to break into small groups and use the information discussed to create a vision.

Explain that to create a vision, participants must be aware of some of the pitfalls that can hamper and cripple your vision. These include:

- Tradition
- Fear of ridicule
- Stereotypes of people, conditions, roles or governing bodies
- Complacency of those involved
- Fatigued leadership
- Short-term thinking
- Naysaying

Break the participants up into small groups to create a vision statement. Ask them to recall that at the beginning of this topic they were asked to imagine that it is five years from today and they have created the most desirable district. Tell group to describe that district, as if they were there now. Tell the groups that their vision should answer the following questions:

- How has the job market changed?
- What has been done to prepare our students for success in this world?
- What is your primary role and responsibility in the community?
- How are meetings structured?

- How has the community changed?
- What is the role of the school in the community?

When the groups have completed the tasks, bring them back together and discuss each of their visions. Compile a list of comparisons and differences in each.

Setting Goals and Objectives

Explain that setting goals and objectives builds on visioning. Goal and objectives more clearly define the vision and how it can be achieved. The difference between where you are now (current status) and where you want to be (your vision) is what you do (goals and objectives.)

- **Goals** specify the accomplishments to be reached if the vision is to become real.
- **Objectives** specific activities required to achieve the goals.

Ask the participants to use their vision statement to identify two goals and the objectives to accomplish them.

Success Stories

Explain that even against overwhelming odds, many school districts have successfully brought about change and dramatically improved the quality of their schools. Explain that participants will be watching a video that will feature two school districts that have found innovative ways to improve their schools and bring change. As they watch the video, ask the participants to look for a common thread(s) in the success stories. Explain that following the video, participants will make a list of some of the techniques and advice given throughout.

Show the video *"Rebuilding America's Schools"* (24 minutes)

Discuss each of the stories presented in the video. Ask the participants to describe what each community did and how they went about achieving their goal.

Charlotte County Virginia *decided that the only way the county could be successful was to have a successful school district. They set about achieving their goal by developing entrepreneurial programs. Statesmen Computers builds and sells computers, not only providing income to the district, but giving students advanced, marketable skills. Profits support the program and are used to bring technology to the district. Partnerships with local higher education facilities provide students with extended learning opportunities. As a result, Charlotte County has become the number one overachieving district in Virginia. In addition, they have instituted other school-to-work programs such as the agricultural land lab.*

Charlotte County has four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. Total student population is approximately 2200 students. The district is 471 square miles.

Wray, Colorado *built a new high school and elementary school as well as a multi-million dollar recreational facility, the Wray Recreation and Activity Center (WRAC) that serves as the centerpiece of the community. The first bond issue for building the school was defeated and the idea of the WRAC was conceived to garner community interest and support. The WRAC sits on what was the site of the original elementary school. Facilities were built through private grants and fund raising activities that involved the entire community. Following these successes, Wray built a new hospital as well. Improvements have brought diversity to the community and made it a more desirable place to live.*

Wray, Colorado is part of the East Yuma County School District. Wray is the larger of two attendance areas. Wray has one elementary school, one middle school and one high school. Idelia, the other attendance area has one elementary school and one secondary school. The total student population for the district is approximately 1015 students. The district is approximately 1200 square miles.

Ask the participants to relate some of the common themes. These may include:

- Don't spend time on the problems. Identify solutions.
- Community involvement is the backbone.
- You must invest in the future to survive.
- Improving education makes the community more desirable.
- Make the school a center for community activity.
- Keep the good and build on it.
- Change requires a paradigm shift.
- Take small blocks toward your goal.

Point out that the primary theme in the success of each of these districts was community. Each of these districts reached out to their surrounding community and garnered support for their initiatives. Discuss how each of the communities tied the improvements to needs of the entire community.

Enlisting Community Support for Change

Public support is key to the success of all efforts to improve schools. Improvement cannot be achieved without a shared sense of purpose and commitment within the community.

Discuss how public support is gathered in politics, marketing and communications and the importance of making communications a priority. Discuss the tools that can be used to build public support.

- Polls and focus groups to listen public opinion
- Brochures, newsletters, videos, radio and TV spots, a web site to publicize messages
- Community organizations to involve parents, grandparents and other community members, especially senior citizens

- Public relations and media relations
- Strategic planning to ensure that all activities work together
- Continual feedback to ensure efforts are achieving results.

Discuss ways of using communications effectively. Communications should:

- Publicize improvements in real, concrete terms. Publicize student work that embodies the change. Make the improvements personal.
- Stress the benefits to the community.
- Relate your work to your community.
- Emphasize the positive aspects of your efforts.

Building Public Confidence

Discuss ways to build support. To build support and gain public confidence, school leaders have to connect with all community members and understand their perceptions. To mobilize support from all community groups, it is important to directly seek the ideas of and use volunteers from the entire community. Doing so will invigorate your drive and empower the community to implement the plan at a grassroots level.

- Collect suggestions and ideas from the community. Survey residents to identify the areas of need as they see them.
- Use the input to define critical concerns and goals.
- Advertise your project, vision, and goals.
- Invite parents and community and business leaders to provide feedback on ideas.
- Focus efforts on older and younger citizens by going into senior activity centers and groups as well as schools.
- Encourage the community to view the school as a community center. Open gym, computer labs, etc. to the public after school hours.
- Identify skills and knowledge that employers require and relate these to educational goals.

Organizing the Community

Explain that there are many ways of involving parents, students, educators, business leaders and other members of the community in the process of school improvement. Ask the participants to describe ways they have organized and

involved the community in their systems. Then break up into groups and ask each group to develop a list of new ways to involve each segment of the community. Bring the group back together and share the ideas.

Parents and Grandparents

Parents and grandparents are vital to school improvement. Because they have a direct stake in school improvement. You can involve parents in the following ways:

- Set up a system for reporting student progress and discussing parental concerns
- Find out how parents are involved now and how they would like to be involved
- Create activities that bring parents, grandparents to the schools
- Encourage and enlist parents and grandparents to serve on advisory boards and school-based management committees
- Develop mentoring programs
- Encourage employers to provide flexible time so parents can attend school-related activities
- Encourage and enlist the aid of those with grant writing experience.

Senior Citizens

It is essential to seek the support of members of the community who do not have children. Senior citizens particularly make up a larger portion of the population than ever before and they have a strong voice in community actions. Any initiatives must have their backing to succeed. To involve this portion of the population:

- Make your schools a center for community activities
- Encourage and enlist seniors and other community members to serve on advisory boards and committees
- Invite seniors in to talk to classes about their experiences and community life as they were growing up
- Encourage them to be involved in mentoring programs
- Invite them to events in the schools, such as concerts or plays
- Open computer labs and let students mentor seniors on learning to use computers

Students

Students are an important and often overlooked segment of the community. Many rural communities know that attracting and keeping younger citizens is crucial to their futures. To involve younger people:

- Survey school students to find out what they like and dislike about the community
- Ask students to suggest ideas and projects that would improve the community
- Have youth representatives on committees and boards
- Set up activities where even the youngest can be involved, such as penny jars to raise money for projects and poster contests to advertise initiatives.

Business Leaders

Involving business leaders in your efforts can build support, measure the effectiveness of solutions, and define workforce skills. To involve business leaders:

- Form coalitions with businesses, schools and community organizations
- Start a volunteer mentor program where employees work with students
- Work with business leaders to develop school-to-work transition programs
- Ask businesses to donate needed materials, such as computers, VCR's, televisions
- Invite business and community leaders to explain how they use their education in the workplace and why school is important.

Educators

Educators are closest to the student's environment and have a strong sense of what is needed to improve education. To involve educators:

- Ask teachers to review student performance to identify ways in which it can be improved to meet community goals
- Ask teachers to identify specific improvements needed in school
- Have teachers work with community and business leaders to match curriculum areas to demands of the workplace.
- Have teachers involve students in determining future needs of the schools.

Discuss ways of involving any other groups within your community.

School-Business Partnerships

Explain the benefits of school-business partnerships. Establishing a business partnership is an effective way to develop strong programs and at the same time form a bond between the school and the community. Partnerships are also a good source of funding to help pay for new or improved buildings or technology.

Ask the participants to define a school-business partnership. A school-business partnership is an agreement between a business and a school to establish certain goals and to develop a plan to achieve those goals. The focus on such partnerships is to improve the overall education system and thus the community.

Discuss the types of partnerships, limited and long-term. Ask participants to relate examples that apply to their schools.

- **Limited partnerships** might provide funds or equipment for a school program and the school might give public credit to the business. For example, a local restaurant might provide food for a school function.

- **Long-term partnerships** have defined goals and purposes. The business and the school work closely to achieve the ends and often are concerned with developing career education and providing on-the-job training. For example, professional business personnel might teach a mini-course or provide enrichment activities.

Discuss how partnerships can help schools. With the pressure of budget cutbacks and the need for major school improvement, business partnerships can ease some of the budget concerns, give the business community some of the responsibility for the quality of education, and make the transition from school to work easier. Partnerships can:

- Supply funds and professional expertise for pilot programs
- Provide workshops for students and staff
- Provide up-to-date equipment
- Provide on-the-job training

- Uplift the moral of the community regarding education
- Act as a liaison between the school and outside resources, such as museums and cultural centers.

Forming Partnerships

Discuss how partnerships are formed. Either a school or a business can initiate a partnership. To form a partnership, both parties must:

- Have a mutual desire to improve education
- Be willing to take time to define goals
- Commit time and effort
- Be comfortable working outside their environment
- Relate well to people

Ask participants to identify potential school-business partnerships in their community. Ask them to draft a letter inviting business leaders to partner with the school.

Conflicts

Explain how conflict can be used to your advantage. With change comes conflict. Pressure groups may work to hamper your goals and change your outcomes to meet theirs. However, you can take advantage of that conflict to rally even more support for your efforts.

Discuss ways of dealing with conflict. To manage conflict:

- Anticipate problems. Conduct opinion polls to determine community feelings on various issues and communicate the results.
- Give advance notice on controversial issues and set aside time for public comment.
- Continually solicit ideas from your community. Pressure groups can have significant effect on policies. Listening to and incorporating their ideas can go a long way in getting their support.
- Identify pressure groups
- Work with people who have complaints.

Discuss ways of using conflict to your advantage. The following techniques can help resolve conflict:

- Meet conflict head on

- Set goals
- Communicate honestly and frequently
- Be honest about concerns
- Agree to disagree. Healthy disagreements can lead to better decisions.
- Eliminate individual ego and be willing to compromise
- Empower your team to create. People support what they create.
- Discuss differences in values
- Look for common threads in your thinking and emphasize those things on which you agree
- Provide more data and information than is needed.

Finding Funding

Explain ways to fund projects. A major part of any long-range plans is developing a plan to pay for the initiative. As you begin developing your funding approach, use the following questions to steer your process:

- How much money is currently available for this initiative?
- How big a part of the budget should it be?
- How much is additional equipment is needed for the program? For example, restructuring, software, continuing charges, program updates or phone line charges for technology programs.
- Will additional funding be needed?
- Are any monies available from grants, state aid programs, or business partnerships?
- Will it be necessary to pass community bond issue or levy?

Discuss the various levels of funding available. These include:

- **Federal Funding** in the form of grants, loans, cooperative agreements, and technical assistance to name a few. Information is available through the Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA).
  - Formula Grants allocate money for activities off a continuing nature not confined to a specific purpose
  - Project Grants provide funding for specific projects or the delivery of specific services for a fixed period. These include fellowships, research grants, experimental

or demonstration grants, planning grants, technical assistance grants, survey grants, and construction grants.
  - A listing of Federal funding resources is available at http://www.clpgh.org/CLP/Foundation/fcgovt.html

- **State Funding** may be available under school reform legislation or other initiatives.

- **Local Funding** can be organized through a forum of local business leaders who know what skills students need to join the work force. Successful schools enhance the community and are excellent community economic development tools.

- **Existing Capital and Operating Budgets** may be able to be reallocated to pay for new initiatives.

- **Grants from Private Foundations or Individuals** normally provide funds for innovative projects, rather than individual pieces of equipment or costs associated with your normal program or service offerings. To identify foundations that may have grants available:
  - Select several foundations in your area of the country (West, middle, East).
  - Send a letter to each foundation you identify requesting their annual report, information about past grants, and application guidelines. At this point you are not asking for money. This is simply an information-gathering request. You can use a letter similar to the one below:

Our Town Public School District
123 Main Street, Our Town, Our State 99999
Your Name, Title

Date

Contact name & title
XYZ Foundation
Address
City, State, ZIP

Dear Ms./Mr./Dr. Contact Person:

At Our Town Public School District we are proud of our ongoing, innovative education programs. Our students are benefiting greatly from the creative ways our district is confronting the education problems in our community.

We are constantly searching for alternative funding to support our continuing efforts to upgrade and innovate our efforts. Please send us a copy of your latest annual report, information about projects that XYZ Foundation has funded recently, and application guidelines. Please also enclose the list of trustees or board members that make funding decisions for XYZ Foundation.

Please send the information to the address above and thank you for your help with our request.

Sincerely,

Your Name.
Title

- Read the information. The foundation is a valid candidate to fund your project if you can answer "yes" to each of the following questions:
  - Does the foundation's funding emphasis (health, literacy, dropout prevention, etc.) match your project?
  - Do the things that the foundation will fund (materials, personnel, equipment, matching funds) match your needs?
  - Does the normal award size match your needs? A foundation that gives average awards of $500 is not a candidate for your $25,000 project.
  - Does the foundation fund your type of organization?
  - Do you fit any limitations?
- Make a preliminary inquiry to each foundation identified to determine their interest. Send a letter (1–2 pages) briefly describing your organization, your project and your needs. Ask if the foundation has any interest in funding a project like yours and is willing to review a proposal.
- Once you receive a response, follow their instructions exactly. If you receive a favorable relay, you will need to develop a proposal. Sometimes you may be told that funds have been spent for the year. Find out what their funding cycle is and reapply.

Other Funding Resources may be necessary once known sources have been exhausted. Sources of funding you may not have thought of include:

- Create a local education foundation through which businesses, organizations, and individuals may donate money, equipment, labor, and expertise to your schools.

- Explore initiatives of major corporations and foundations.
- Seek the support of local telephone and utility companies. They often actively support technology programs or provide supplemental help with existing programs.
- Establish joint purchasing plans with other school districts, county and state governments, or other entities. Purchasing cooperatives can help you shop more aggressively for better prices.
- Form a regional consortium to buy instructional software, create communications networks, and develop teaching and training methods.

Grant Writing

Explain that grants provide an excellent source of funding for getting a project started or keeping it running. Projects are sometimes funded by one source, but in most cases, will be funded by multiple sources. Once a project is developed, proposals to different grantors can be written from the same project development information.

Review general how-tos of proposal writing. Ask the participants to discuss their experiences. Compile a list of "lessons learned." When writing proposals you should:

- Be sure your project is fully developed, then the proposal will write itself. Grant Funders don't fund good ideas. They want to know exactly what you are going to do when you get the money.
- Do not send the same proposal to multiple sources. Foundations are very individual and the proposal should be personalized for each funding source.
- Write persuasively. You must sell the concept.
- This is not an academic paper. Write clear, simple sentences. Don't take previous knowledge for granted. Assume that you must educate your reader on your problem.
- Include letters of support that insure that the project has local investment and will continue after grant funding runs out.
- Getting a project funded can be more than just money. It may also include such things as sharing people, partnering, donating materials, etc.
- Funders are looking for projects that solve problems. Attack the problem, not the symptoms.

Discuss what information should be included in the proposal. The proposal should include the following sections:

- **Problem Statement** describing why you are launching the project.
- **Mission Statement** that describes what you hope to accomplish through your project
- **What You are Seeking** from the foundation, whether it is seed money for start-up costs or money to expand or continue a project.
- **Who We Are** statement describing your organization and/or district and the number of people you service, etc.
- **Problem and Solution** describing the problem that now exists and how you intend to resolve the issue. Remind

participants that this is similar to creating goals and objectives: The difference between where you are now (current status) and where you want to be (your vision) is what you do (goals and objectives.)

- **Project Requirements** describing specifically how funding will be used.
- **List your needs** for personnel, training, equipment, supplies, and services.

Cost Analysis and Budget **for each year of the project, broken out into item, number, cost per and total.**

Taking Action

Discuss the importance of supporting and lobbying for legislation. Ask the participants to share ideas for advocacy.

- Write letters to the editor of the local paper on key issues
- Form a group to research, study and discuss information issues and proposed legislation
- Arrange meetings with members of Congress on key issues and keep up on their voting record
- Publicize your views
- Thank members of Congress when they support key issues
- Organize a letter campaign on key issues

Writing Your Legislator

Explain that a personal letter is a very effective way to tell your senator or representative how you feel about an issue. Personal letters have more impact that mass-produced postcards or form letters. When writing a letter:

- Get right to the point. Give your reason for writing in the first paragraph, preferably in the first sentence.
- Be courteous. Express opinions firmly but respectfully.
- Be specific. If you are writing about a piece of legislation, refer to it by name and bill number.
- Let them know you are from the home district and that you are a voter.
- Identify your role in the school and/or community.
- Address only one issue per letter and try to keep your letter to one page.

Provide participants with information on how to address letters. Address letters as follows:

- To a senator:

  The Honorable (First and Last Names)
  United States Senate
  Washington, DC 20510

  Dear Senator (Last Name):

- To a representative:

  The Honorable (First and Last Names)
  United States House of Representatives
  Washington, DC 20515

  Dear Congressman/Congresswoman (Last Name):

- To a committee chair or Speaker of the House:
  Dear Mr. Chairman or Madam Chairwoman:
  Dear Mr. Speaker:

Lobbying Your Legislator

Explain that meeting with your legislator is an excellent way to establish a relationship for the future. Discuss tips for meeting with members of Congress.

- Make an appointment well in advance and be prepared to wait for one. Members of Congress have hectic schedules and many demands on their time.
- Let your member of Congress know how many people you represent and how much your community pays in federal, state and local taxes. Remind him or her that you vote each year.
- Offer to let your Congressperson tour your community so they get to know you better.
- Plan your meeting in advance. Know what you want to discuss. Two or three critical issues are enough.
- Be educational. Your Congressperson may not know about every issue and your job will be to bring him or her up to speed.
- Follow up with a letter restating your concerns and thanking him or her for taking the time to see you.

Writing a Letter to the Editor

Explain that letters to the editor or guest editorials are a good way to increase awareness of issues that effect your school district and community. Newspapers welcome well-written opinion pieces. Share some examples of letters to the editor with participants and discuss what makes a letter or op-ed piece effective.

- Get to the point. Give a concise summary of what you are going to discuss in the first paragraph.
- Establish your credibility. Tell the reader who you are and your role in the community and school district.
- Write about what you know.
- Be brief. Limit your letter to 300 words or less (1-2 double-spaced typed pages.)
- Look for a hook. Your letter will draw more attention if it relates to something current in the news.
- Make personal contact with the paper and find out the name

of the person who reviews letters. Call that person a few days after you send your letter and ask if it will be published.

Ask the participants to research and/or review examples of relevant legislation. Discuss how each would benefit (or hurt) their communities.

Break the participants into groups. **Have one group draft a letter to a member of Congress asking him or her to support (or vote against) the legislation. Have another group write a letter to the editor on a key issue.**

Conclusion

Remember to tell the participants that they are not alone. The problems they face are the same as many other communities around the country. Every decision does not require an original solution; it just requires a solution. They should start to think about other communities in the area that might have similar problems. It is possible to come up with solutions that can be applied to many communities. There are resources, within your community and outside, they just need to be discovered.

If there are several different communities at this workshop create a contact list of names and phone numbers. Distribute the list to all of the participants present at the workshop.

Components of a Thorough Building Analysis

Developed by Fanning/Howey Associates, Inc., Architects/Engineers
Celina, Ohio

Communities should use this analysis to determine what problems might exist in their school buildings. It provides a list of items that need to be reviewed to help plan for infrastructure improvements.

Site

- Circulation/Traffic
  - Adequate Visitor and Staff Parking
  - Separation of Bus and Car Traffic
  - Handicapped Accessibility
  - Adequate Drainage
  - Adequate Lighting
- Play Areas
  - Adequate Drainage
  - Code-compliant Playground Equipment
  - Safety Surfaces at Play Equipment
- Athletic Fields
  - Adequate Drainage

Building

- Exterior Envelope
  - Windows
    - Thermally-broken Frames
    - Insulated Glass
    - Operable Vents
    - Screens
  - Exterior Walls
    - Moisture-resistance
    - Settlement
    - Condition at Roof Edges
  - Roof
    - Condition of Covering
    - Positive Slope to Drains
    - Insulation Value
    - Edge Conditions
  - Doors
    - Insulated Aluminum Doors
    - Modern Hardware for Security and Safety
    - Vestibules for Energy Savings

Components of a Thorough Building Analysis

Building Interior
- Asbestos Abatement
- Lead-based Paint Analysis
- Handicapped Accessibility (Routes, Restrooms, and Door Hardware
- Flooring suitable for Planned Activities
- Sufficient Classroom Cabinets
- Marker boards in Computer Areas
- Fire Code Exiting and Safety Compliance
- Modern Lockers
- Furniture Evaluation
- Interior Arrangement
  - Computer Labs
  - Adequate Media Center
  - Adequate Special Education Facilities
  - Adequate Space for All Support Programs
  - Locker Rooms for Girls' Sports
  - Parent and Outside Agency Spaces

Technology
- Incoming Service Capability
- Head-end Location
- Wiring Closets
- Distribution System
- Wiring Accessibility
- Data/Video Ports
- Telephone Locations
- Computer Locations in Classrooms

Mechanical
- Adequate General Ventilation
- Efficient Main Plant Operation
- Modern Temperature Control System
- Restroom/Locker Room Exhaust
- Consideration of Air-Conditioning

Components of a Thorough Building Analysis

Electrical

Adequate Lighting
Main Service Capacity for Technology
Updated Fire Alarm System
Code-compliant Emergency and Exit Lighting
Additional Receptacles for General Use
Additional Receptacles for Technology

Plumbing

Handicapped Accessible Fixtures and Trim
Adequate Supply, Waste and Vent Piping
Code-compliant Sewage Disposal System
Modern Water Treatment System

Members of Organizations Concerned About Rural Education

American Academy of Physician Assistants

American Association of School Administrators

American Association of State Colleges and Universities

American Library Association

Bell Atlantic

Bell South

Communicating for Agriculture

Consortium for School Networking

Credit Union National Association

National Association of Counties

National Association of Elementary School Principals

National Association of Secondary School Principals

National Education Association

National Education Knowledge Industries Association

National Farmers Union

National Grange

National Rural Education Association

National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

National School Boards Association

National Vocational Agricultural Teachers Association

National Country Education Foundation

Pennsylvania Association of Rural and Small Schools

SBC Communications

US West Communications